

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON

GEOGRAPHIC VARIATION IN THE COOT
IN NEW GUINEA

BY MAX C. THOMPSON AND PHILIP TEMPLE

*University of Kansas Museum of Natural History, Lawrence,
Kansas, and Bishop Museum, Honolulu, Hawaii*

In March 1963, an expedition from the Bernice P. Bishop Museum¹ spent 14 days at Lake Anggi Gidji in the Arfak Mountains of the Vogelkop of West New Guinea (Irian Barat). Among the specimens taken were five coots, *Fulica atra*, that had been known previously from Lake Anggi Gidji by only two specimens deposited in the American Museum of Natural History. The only other place in New Guinea from which coots are known is Lake Habbema in the Oranje Mountains of the Central Highlands; specimens from there also are in the American Museum. When compared with the specimens from Lake Habbema, those from Lake Anggi Gidji prove to differ subspecifically and are named and described below.

***Fulica atra anggiensis*, new subspecies**

Type: Female, adult, No. 483531 U. S. National Museum, Lake Anggi Gidji, Arfak Mountains, 6200 feet, West New Guinea; obtained on 2 March 1963 by Max C. Thompson, original number 3754.

Range: Known only from Lake Anggi Gidji, Arfak Mountains, West New Guinea.

Diagnosis: Similar to *novaeguineae* but wing, frontal shield and bill are smaller.

Measurements: ♂ (1), wing 184 mm, tip of bill to top of frontal shield 51 mm.

♀ (4), wing 174-179 (176) mm, tip of bill to top of frontal shield 45-58 (50) mm. Measurements of the holotype are 174 and 58 mm.

Remarks: Mayr (List of New Guinea Birds. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist., 1941, p. 27) listed the range of *Fulica atra* as including the Anggi Lakes but indicated that the subspecies there was unknown. The two older

¹Partial results of field work supported by the U. S. Army Medical Research and Development Command, Dept. of the Army, DA-MD-49-193-62-G47 and G65.

specimens from Lake Anggi Gidji, in the American Museum, do not agree in coloration with the material from Lake Habbema because the former are foxed, as shown by comparison with the new material from the area (Gilliard, personal comm.). No difference in coloration could be detected between the fresh material of *anggiensis* and the specimens from Lake Habbema of *novaeguineae*. The species was found to be common at Lake Anggi Gidji where pairs were seen in the marshy areas around the shore of the lake as well as rafts of 75–100 birds on the open water. Some of the specimens taken showed evidence of being in breeding condition. Although there are two lakes in the area, we were unable to visit the other. The natives in the area said that the coot also occurs there.

The specimens of *anggiensis* are deposited in the Bishop Museum, University of Kansas Museum of Natural History, American Museum of Natural History and the U. S. National Museum.

Fulica atra novaeguineae Rand

Fulica atra novaeguineae Rand, 1940, Amer. Mus. Novit., No. 1072, p. 4.—Lake Habbema, 3225 m.

Measurements: ♂ (1), wing 196 mm, tip of bill to top of frontal shield 57 mm.

♀ (4), wing 189–199 (191.7) mm, tip of bill to top of frontal shield 57–59 (57.5) mm.

Remarks: The frontal shield of *novaeguineae* when compared with that of *anggiensis* was not only longer (one instance of overlap) but broader. All of the specimens of *novaeguineae* examined were collected in August 1938 at the type locality.